

CH. IV

CRUCIBLE OF EMPIRES

63

perhaps the Piazza of St. Mark's at Venice, and that on a **175**
 humbler scale, could even aspire to compete. Others have **246**
 written of the tombs of the city, the Shahzinda¹ mausoleum
 and the rest. Every witness has striven, as did Curzon, to
 pass on a vision of the Samarkandian tiles — 'turquoise and
 sapphire, green, plum-coloured and orange, crusted over with
 a rich siliceous glaze, and inscribed with mighty Kufic letters
 — by which these glorious structures were once wholly and
 are still in part adorned'.²

In Tsarist times it was complained that the Russians had **000**
 done nothing to preserve these great relics from demolition
 and decay, and further damage was done during the inter-
 regnum between the fall of Tsardom and the consolidation
 of Soviet power. Fortunately, there is reason to believe from
 later observation, reinforced by the evidence of local publica-
 tions, that the Soviets have awoken to this heritage. The
 climate itself, dry and comparatively soft, is probably as
 favourable to ancient buildings as any in the world; the
 damage comes from earthquakes, which in that country are
 frequent and severe.

In the eyes of Eastern Turks Timur is the great assimilator. **829**
 The policy they see worked out in the conqueror's hands is
 that of the adaptation of Turkish culture to the traditions of
 Islam, a synthesis of Turkish valour with Arab-Persian
 civilization. Timur, having conquered, set aside his bar-
 barities, and aimed at the ennoblement of the Turkish political
 tradition by infusing it with the stream of Islamic thought,
 in his time modern. But this was a confluence, not a blending,
 of two living currents, each indeed colouring the other at the
 margins, but flowing side by side and apart towards the sea.
 This twofold influence, they hold, has enabled the most
 representative Turks of this and indeed of all ages, to remain
 conscious of the things of the spirit, but to draw a clear dis-
 tinction between religion and politics.

The conquests of Timur in the field of battle were more **175**
 fleeting than those of Chingiz who preceded him. Even the

¹ Cf. Bib. I, 54, p. 86.

Op. cit. p. 326.

175 from its mouth, and in the following year a Russian expedition penetrated into the Ili Valley. The Crimean War then arrested progress, but by 1863 the line had reached Chimkent and the northern oases, and included parts of the Tienshan and Lake Issik K  l.

175 These advances on the Kazak steppe and into the mountains
538 had not been achieved without a struggle. A strenuous
829 resistance was put up by the Kazak Khan, Kine Sari, whose name is celebrated in many a ballad as the hero of these tribes. He was the grandson of the famous Abilay Khan, who late in the XVIIIth century had succeeded in delaying the Russian advance by means of a diplomatic alliance with China. Abilay's grave is beside that of Ahmed Yesevi in the shrine built by Timur at Yese, and his name has been eclipsed in Kazak story only by that of Kine Sari, his descendant. Kine Sari is to the Kazaks what the hero Shamil was to the people of the North Caucasus in their fifty years' struggle against Russian penetration ending in 1860. Until recently the Soviets looked favourably on the ballads and chronicles which extol the glory of these chieftains, but for the last few years the word has gone forth that literature of this kind is the worst form of bourgeois-nationalism. The Academies are forbidden to exalt writers who seek to hallow men who were nothing but feudal brigands engaged in a selfish warfare for their own pockets, a warfare directed not only against their big Russian brother but against the true interests of their own people. The Soviet press, central and local, is full of fulminations against the glorification of the misguided bandits who in the name of a petty tribalism resisted what is represented as the inevitable absorption of their country in a higher culture.

Kine Sari's period of renown lasted for the decade 1837 to 1846. His resistance was based on tribal fastnesses set up in the recesses of the Kara Tav and the northern part of the Ulu Tav, and for a while he maintained his position against the Russians as far west as the Ural River. In the end he fell in fratricidal strife with the Kirghiz of the Issik K  l region. He is famous for his exchange of words with the envoy sent

CH. V

TSARIST CONQUEST

75

by Beymembet, a Kazak who had gone over to the Russians 175
and came to him with proposals for an armistice. In his letter 538
Beymembet had written — Can the horned ram, head of a 8290
great herd though he be, overcome the lion? The end of
rebellion is evil. Kine Sari quietly read the letter, turned to the
envoy, and replied — He who sets a trap awry leaves his
manhood in it. Is it not better to die in battle or upon the
wastes of the steppe than face dishonour and be a slave? ¹

Even the Kirghiz who later slew him, and the Sarts of
Tashkent who took him prisoner and murdered his father
Kasim, revere Kine Sari as the national hero of all Turkistan.
His death at the hands of the Kirghiz shows well enough how
futile in action was this inchoate tribal resistance to the Russian
advance. But that his name lives on today in the peoples'
hearts is clear from the childish iterations of a Russian propa-
ganda that never ceases to condemn his legend as a shameful
survival from an unregenerate age.

The Russian Chancelleries felt that these successive 175
advances, culminating in the capture of Chimkent, needed
some justification before world opinion. This was provided
in the well-known memorandum of the Tsar's Chancellor,
Prince Gorchakov, addressed in 1864 to the governments of
the States with which Russia was in diplomatic relations. The
substance of this memorandum is clear from the following
citation :

The position of Russia in Central Asia is that of all civilized
states which come into contact with half-savage wandering tribes
possessing no fixed social organization. It invariably happens in
such cases that the interests of security on the frontier, and of
commercial relations, compel the more civilized state to exercise a
certain ascendancy over neighbours whose turbulence and nomad
instincts render them difficult to live with.

Having so stated the problem in general terms, Gorchakov
went on to claim that the solution had been found by moving
the frontier beyond the nomads to locate it in a fertile country
with a sedentary population. In this way he justified the

¹ Togan, *op. cit.* p. 314.

175 act of grace, but really because the Russians had been alarmed
 669 by the prowess of Kine Sari and his like, the tribes of Turkistan
 had been exempted from military service, and, in his view
 foolishly, regarded this as a privilege. Foolishly, because this
 charter did not exempt them from confiscations and plunder in
 kind, and, in any case, the exemption was in the end withdrawn.
 The Tsar's order directing mobilization of all males between
 19 and 43 was regarded as the fatal and final spark which led
 to a general explosion.

The Kipchaks of the Kazak steppe came into prominence
 again under a leader Abdul Ghaffar, who for a short time
 succeeded in reviving the enthusiasms of the days of Kine
 Sari, eighty years before. There were sporadic revolts also
 in Farghana and the rest of the Uzbek country down the Amu
 as far as Khiva, and small bodies of Russian troops or colonists
 were murdered wherever found. The action taken in reprisal
 by the last Governor-General, Kuropatkin, was in the tradition
 of Skobelev, whose pupil he was, thousands of tribesmen
 being exterminated or driven into the wastes to die. There is
 no doubt that the strenuous military effort required of the
 Tsar's government to crush this rebellion at a time when
 Russia was at the crisis of her great struggle with Germany
 and Austria affected the course of the War. Internally, too, it
 may even be said that the diversion of troops was in itself a
 contributory cause of the fall of the Tsar and the success of
 the revolutionaries.

829 In the earlier years of the Soviet régime, when lip service
 669 was still paid to nationalism, it was fashionable for Soviet
 writers to refer with enthusiastic approval to these nationalist
 movements of the pre-revolutionary era.⁴ Even the *Great
 Soviet Encyclopedia* in its first edition commended them as
 risings of the workers against the oppression of the Tsar's
 government. But this attitude is now condemned as a distor-
 tion, false coin to be withdrawn from circulation in common
 with the edition of the encyclopedia which gave it currency.
 These movements are now represented as reactionary risings
 of the feudal classes, dissatisfied by the diminution of the
 2110, of 1898 and 1911, see cat. 116, pp 88-90 - A-1/1/17

CH. V

TSARIST CONQUEST

91

power of the Khans and clergy. Because it is true that the Dükchi Ishan movement in particular was to some extent a reaction inspired by the Turkic and Islamic traditions of the Farghana Valley, Soviet critics single it out for special castigation on the ground that its leaders aimed at the severance of the peoples of Central Asia from Russia and the Great Russian people — an aim which official teaching now proclaims to have been without validity even in Tsarist times. We shall observe later the development in Soviet hands of a first principle of historical dialectics,¹ designed and applied to establish that Tsarist conquests and suppressions of local nationalism were but the first and right stage in a process leading inevitably to the present Soviet national policy.

As the year 1917 went by, the rebellion was succeeded by widespread famine. The economy of Turkistan, exporting cotton for grain, was brittle in the extreme. World war and local revolt had together produced a situation in which most of the surplus grain was wanted to feed the armies on the Western front and even that which was left over could not be carried to Turkistan along railways that were cut and disorganized. It was not surprising that the brighter spirits among the more educated Turks in Central Asia denounced this revolt as wasted effort and after the October Revolution looked for kindred spirits among the Bolsheviks who would advance the cause of the freedom of the peoples of Turkistan.

And so, heralded by massacre and famine, looms up the Soviet era in this homeland of the Turks. The Tsars in their time had done little to lift the curtain from a country that a long isolation had made mysterious. It was as if, inheriting the jealous exclusiveness of the Emirs before them, they had something serious to conceal. But in 1917 it seemed that the barriers were at last about to fall.

¹ Known as the Conception of the Lesser Evil. See pp. 231-2.

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